

AIDS NETWORK OF EDMONTON

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 15, 1986

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 3

AIDS IN EDMONTON, DON'T GET SCARED - GET SMART

Between 200 and 250 people attended the "AIDS in Edmonton" Forum given at the Convention Centre, March 11, by the newly formed Inter-Agency Council on AIDS. It was opened at 7:00 by Dr. Paul Sackman, from the Edmonton Board of Health, who briefly outlined the agenda for the evening, then introduced the rest of the panel of speakers: Dr. Colin Soskolne, from the U of A; Dr. Cate Hankins, from the National Advisory Council on AIDS; Dr. Bryce Larke from the Canadian Red Cross; and Michael Phair, representing the NETWORK.

Dr. Sackman began by describing the viral nature of AIDS, and the fears which have arisen regarding it. The tone of his address was generally positive, centering on the relatively low mortality rate, the fragility of the virus, the difficulty of becoming exposed to the virus, and the research being done to combat/control it.

Dr. Soskolne opened with a definition of an epidemic; "an excessive number of afflicted people, within which the disease seems to be growing, or propagating itself". He gave a breakdown of the groups reporting a high incidence of AIDS, and described the ratio between those exposed (assume 100), those who develop ARC (10), and those who develop AIDS (1).

He also presented updated numbers of people with AIDS; approx. 18,000 in the USA (expected to be 26,000 by the end of the year), and approx. 500 in Canada; and some of the reasons for this difference. He suggested that Canada is about 18 - 24 months behind the USA in the development of the disease, and that this forewarning should give us time to mobilize our efforts toward prevention.

Dr. Hankins spoke about the monies being spent on the Federal level on research into AIDS; approx. \$180 million in the USA, and approx. \$2 million in Canada. She deplored the fact that nothing has been done to monitor any changes in sexual behavior, but suggested that such things as condom sales and the decreased incidence of gonorrhea indicate that peoples' sexual habits are changing. She also commented on the transmissibility of the disease, reaffirming that people with AIDS working in food service industries pose no health risk. She discussed the absurdity of funeral directors who refuse to permit open-casket services for people with AIDS, and of prison officials who refuse to acknowledge the existence of homosexual activity. She advised against the closure of bath houses, suggesting that these provide an access to educating people who might otherwise become unreachable. She made several announcements on behalf of the Federal Advisory Committee, regarding the forthcoming approval of certain experimental drugs, and the upcoming release of several new/revised pamphlets. She closed by applauding the response to the AIDS crisis by "local community groups who have had to operate on shoestring budgets".

Dr. Larke spoke to calm the hysteria surrounding the blood supply at the Red Cross. He explained that in the past, only a very small percentage of those infected (2 - 3%) were exposed to the AIDS virus through blood transfusions. He said that while people who have already been infected may continue to appear, there is now practically no risk of being infected by receiving a blood transfusion (due to blood screening measures recently implemented), and absolutely no risk in giving blood. He closed by appealing to



AIDS IN EDMONTON (cont'd)

people in high-risk groups to not donate blood as a means of determining their antibody response status.

Michael Phair spoke on behalf of the AIDS NETWORK, briefly outlining the role of the NETWORK over the past 20 months, with particular regard to:

- providing information
- liaising with medical persons and concerned organizations
- providing support to persons with AIDS, ARC, antibody-positive status, and the "worried well"

He describes the fear which has arisen about AIDS, how this fear, misinformation, and willful ignorance are making the work of the NETWORK more difficult. He closed by inviting people to join the NETWORK, or become volunteers.

After all of the panelists had finished speaking, they opened the floor to questions. There were about 30 questions, comments, and statements of support for the AIDS NETWORK.

My overall impression was that the forum was both well presented, and well received. The mood was serious, but positive. The speakers presented a strong, clear, and unified message of factual information - generating concern, but dispelling panic.

David Airth

TIMES OF HARVEY MILK

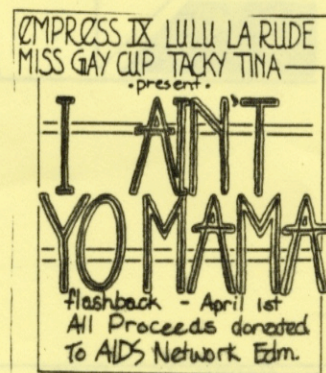
On March 4th, over 130 people came to the Roxy Theatre to enjoy the award winning film "The Times of Harvey Milk" in support of the AIDS NETWORK. Over \$600 was received from this event. None of it could have been possible without the help and generosity of Roxy owner Tom Hutchinson.

QUOTE

"I don't have sex with my patients." — Dr Hillary Wass of Vancouver's St Paul's Hospital AIDS ward explaining why she isn't afraid of getting AIDS.

THE BODY POLITIC • MARCH 1986

UPCOMING EVENTS



Coming Soon: a Cut-a-thon at Boots and Saddles featuring some of Edmonton's top hairstylists. Proceeds to the NETWORK.

April 28: No Sad Songs, A Canadian documentary on AIDS by Bill Shellhan, at the Roxy Theatre at 7:00 p.m.

A DEATH IN OUR FAMILY

After four weeks at Camsell Hospital, Luis E. died. Luis was the sixth person diagnosed with AIDS in Edmonton. He lived by himself and had only a small group of friends. Yet for those of us who knew him it was shocking to watch the final days -- it happened so fast and Luis became such a different person. There were days when Luis was incoherent and paranoid and other times when he was quite aware, alert and interested in the world.

Luis died without any family -- his friends and the NETWORK took care of his affairs; some gathered up and stored his belongings; and others picked out and bought an urn for his ashes. He did not wish a religious funeral so we had a friendship ceremony where we spoke and thought of him -- a friend, a man who died too soon.

IT'S ONLY THE BEGINNING

Not many women in our community have had the unpleasant knowledge that one of their gay men friends has AIDS. AIDS in Edmonton so far has not developed into a full blown epidemic BUT it will. And when our gay brothers, friends and gay fathers begin to show signs of stress, we the women's community will have a lot to deal with.

IT'S ONLY THE BEGINNING (cont'd)

I write to you not from an intellectual point of view but from personal experience. Last year as coach of the Edmonton Roughnecks one of my players had AIDS.

The first day I met him we were sitting at the bar discussing the evening's volleyball game. He explained to me that he had just gotten out of the hospital and was diagnosed with AIDS, that the specialist from Toronto had told him that night he only had a year or two to live.

My first reaction to him was to give him optimism, to tell him that he might be able to beat the odds, maybe live 3-5 years. But, how realistic was that, I thought? I just did not want to accept the fact he was dying.

When I drove home that night I felt a lot of pain and anger. I thought why him, why couldn't it be someone else, what did he do to deserve it?

As I coached this man my heart grew fonder for him by the minute. He would always have a hug for me, a joke to tell or a crazy move on the volleyball court to make me laugh. He would never give up learning a new skill and worked harder than anyone expected. Everyone on the team liked and cared for him.

At times it was very painful to watch this man pull himself through practice, exhausted, dripping in sweat and sometimes in pain, but he never gave up. It was so hard having him sit out a game so that he could catch his breath, being so scared to put him back into the game, in fear that he would become exhausted and sick.

As a coach I take pride in seeing my players develop as good volleyball players and mature as people. I watched this man meet a challenge head on and fight the whole way. My admiration was never greater for a person than him.

My player has since moved on to another city, and saying goodbye was very painful. He left to go home, to be with his family, not knowing whether he would live long enough to return. In saying farewell I knew I would never see him alive again. I cried that night, still not understanding why, but knowing that this was only the beginning.

Cheryl S.

OFFICE SEARCH OVER!

The AIDS NETWORK of Edmonton is pleased (and relieved) to announce the acquisition of our own office as of April 1, 1986 at:

10233 - 98 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 0M7

Telephone: 424-4722 and
424-4767

Anyone interested in joining or working with the AIDS NETWORK is invited to attend the GATE office (#104, 10173 - 104 Street) from 12:00 - 2:00 p.m.

EDMONTON JOURNAL EDITORIAL

Narrow minds

Responding to a proposal in a justice department report that would prohibit discrimination against homosexuals, Calgary East MP Alex Kindy says he would oppose any bill endorsing such "sexual deviation." What has protecting minorities got to do with endorsing their lifestyles?

"Would you feel secure leaving your small children with a homosexual or lesbian nanny?" Kindy asks.

Calgary South MP Bobbie Sparrow says "there is a sexual deviation I cannot accept." She believes gays should be able to rent apartments, but not teach school — "Kids' lives are tough enough without being faced with the abnormal."

These Tories equate sexual orientation with child molestation. This is a vicious distortion of reality. Their lack of understanding of the issue is appalling. Worse, these people are entrusted with the power to make our laws.

Instead of fretting over whether homosexuals should be allowed to teach or care for our children, there is a more important question to address: Should bigots and fools be allowed to hold political office?

* Reprinted from the EDMONTON JOURNAL
March 7, 1986.

FLASHBACK

Wednesday Nites

25¢ of every beer + highball
sold donated to the AIDS NETWORK